



Illinois Department of Transportation

Office of the Secretary
2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois / 62764
Telephone 217/782-5597

September 20, 2002

FHWA Docket No. FHWA-2001-10370 - 8
U.S. Department of Transportation
Dockets Management Facility
Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

02 OCT -8 PM 12:16
DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Illinois Department of Transportation submits the following comments in response to the Federal Highway Administration's notice of proposed rulemaking entitled "Commercial Vehicle Width Exclusive Devices" published in the July 29, 2002 Federal Register.

Illinois is opposed to any changes that would preempt state law. Our comments address the two proposals for changes to 23 CFR Part 658, pertaining to commercial vehicles.

The first proposal would increase the distance that width exclusive devices, as defined by 23 CFR Part 658.16 and in Appendix D to Part 658, could protrude from the side of a commercial vehicle from 3 inches to 4 inches. Illinois law does not allow protrusions from any vehicle to be excluded in the measurement of width unless the objects are considered safety devices. At this time, this change would not affect the current laws in the state of Illinois as long as the entire width of the commercial vehicle, including non-safety protrusions, is less than 96 inches on non-designated and Class III truck routes or 102 inches on Class I and II truck routes.

The second proposal would remove recreational vehicles from the definition of commercial motor vehicles and authorize states to allow recreational vehicles with safety and/or non-cargo carrying appurtenances extending beyond 4 inches from the side to operate without a permit. In Illinois, there are presently no allowances for excluding non-safety protrusions in the measurement of the width of recreational vehicles. A vehicle up to 102-inches wide, including non-safety protrusions, would be in compliance with existing width laws on most state highways, but would not be legal on most county, township, city and other local roads.

The highways in Illinois are designed to accommodate the maximum length, height, width and weights currently allowed by US DOT regulations. Allowing wider vehicles reduces safety on the highway system. Approximately 14,000 miles of local agency highways in Illinois presently have 9-foot wide driving lanes. This rule change will allow commercial and recreational vehicles that

FHWA Docket No. FHWA-2001-10370
September 20, 2002
Page Two

are 8-feet 6-inches wide to include devices which would add up to 8 inches to the width of those vehicles. As a result of the proposal, trucks and motor homes 9-feet 2-inches wide would legally operate on highway lanes that are 9-feet wide. The vehicles would be wider than the highway, causing the risk of sideswiping.

In addition to the sideswipe risk, consideration should be given to the risk associated with turning movements in rural intersections. A 9-foot 2-inch wide vehicle trying to make a right turn from a 9-foot wide lane to a 9-foot wide lane would have to encroach into an opposing lane of traffic to prevent the rear wheels of the vehicle leaving the pavement and tracking onto the shoulder of the intersection.

Commercial and recreational vehicles should not be allowed to exceed the current legal dimensions. The devices that are the reason for the proposed width exclusions can be designed to fit within the current legal dimensions for the vehicles.

Our objections to this regulatory change are based strictly on highway safety considerations. Because of the heavy traffic volumes and the large inventory of narrow highways in this state, we oppose the proposed changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this notice of proposed rulemaking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirk Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kirk Brown
Secretary